

## **E. Marketing and Recruitment**

The first step you took in planning your AFI Project—defining your target population—helped identify the clients you will likely serve. Actually getting these people involved in your AFI Project, however, requires outreach to recruit participants. Some Projects tap into their current client base.

An important additional target group is the clients of other agencies with eligible clientele. Examples include Head Start, Community Action Agencies, Workforce Investment Boards, faith-based organizations, Small Business Administration one-stop centers, community colleges, and public housing agencies. Talk to other providers and give them a supply of your program brochures. Speak at their meetings to educate their staff. And, of course, learn about what other groups are out there for you to link to. Cross-referrals are good for your IDA effort but also for the work other agencies do in serving needy clients.

One of the initial reactions potential participants have when they first hear about IDAs is, “This sounds too good to be true.” That reaction is cited as a major hurdle to marketing a new IDA program in a community. Organizations that have a track record of success and trustworthiness working with their target population find it easier to attract participants and maintain strong relationships with their clients throughout the course of the project.

Many project administrators have found that the initial time required to do the marketing, attract attendees to orientation sessions, and actually enroll participants is longer than they anticipated. Projects have found that marketing the program to participants takes time and flexibility. Several current AFI Projects recommend that new projects limit the target market to individuals and families already intimately familiar with your organization or rely on community presentations, word of mouth, and referrals for marketing rather than mass distribution of brochures and flyers. For strategies on marketing and recruitment (and retention!), see Appendix F.